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DEBRIEFING OF FRANCIS GARY POWERS

Tape: #3
Date: 14 February 1962
Time:

Present: James Cunningham
Kelly Johnson
Francis Gary Powers
[redacted] Standing by

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Jim C. Well, I don't know exactly how to begin on this, Frank,
except to say - well let's see - Johnny McMahon
who was going to come up with us, I don't know whether
you remember John or not

Powers Yes, I do

Jim C. He got the flu over the week-end because of no sleep since
long about Wednesday to Monday but a he.. I talked to him
this morning he said be sure and give you his best regards
and he hoped to come up if he could with the group tomorrow.
Kelly and I came up today simply to sort of associate ourselves
with you again and not to conduct any kind of detailed discussion
necessarily on the aerodynamics but since Kelly built it I
can't think of any better guy to ask you some of the questions

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that I know have been on his mind over these past few years a good many of which I think we had from the beginning as a function of what we saw in the press and what we heard from the other side. Kelly, do you think you would like to pursue the line of questioning at this point?

Johnson Well, I want to start off with saying I'm awfully glad to see you again, Frank.

Powers Thank you.

Johnson We certainly did our best to try to study what happened when the famous Mayday came around. We've taken May 1 off our calendar from now on - we could wreck you to May 2. After the incident happened we took whatever information we could get and we had some very good photographs from magazines and things that when they put the job on display and we tried to analyze all we could to see whether or not there had been any technical shortcomings out of that and I'd just like to hear from you just what happened as nearly as you can remember and see how it fits together with the

studies that we made on the airplane from the photographs that were taken.

Powers Well, as near as I can remember, and I think I can recall it pretty clearly, the only mechanical malfunction of the airplane was the pitch control or Mach censor of the auto-pilot and that happened only twenty minutes before the thing went down and I was flying manually all the time after that.

Jim C. Well, that's interesting because I was wondering whether or not the auto-pilot had given you any trouble.

Powers It gave me some trouble for several minutes ~~xx~~ there and finally I just discarded it altogether. I could have made a decision there to turn around and come back, which would have been a very good decision to make I think, but since I was - by looking at the maps - approximately halfway, the weather was bad behind and perfectly clear ahead, and I had some short-cuts I could take ahead - I thought I'd go along. I

Jim C. I'll just say one question. You were reported and said you were at 68,500 at that time I think. Was this..this I believe was a lesser altitude wasn't it than you had-?

Powers Yes. That was.. I tried to save as much altitude as I could. I mean, not let them know what the altitude was.

Jim C. But you had.. oh, I see.. were you actually at 60?

Powers I was at 70.

Jim C. 70, I see.

Powers My scheduled plan was to climb until I reached 70 and maintain 70 for the duration of the flight.

Jim C. But you had not at any point prior to that been above 70?

Powers No

Jim C. Flying manually, I mean as far as that

Powers They showed me a radar track they had on me or what they said they had on me, and anyway, they had every place - every reading - altitude reading they had was 20,000 meters except one which was 22,000 meters. So, they were apparently reading a little low or didn't put the truth on their paper there. But I arrived at this place just south of Sverdlovsk. I don't know ~~if~~ whether you've - may have the flight plan

Jim. C. Yes, we happen to have it - a copy of it here.

Powers Thank you. I can draw it is I

Jim C. Yes, I think I can, too. Let me see where we have here on the actual maps.

Johnson When you were cruising along what things ~~were~~ - all under control as far as you were concerned?

Powers Everything. I had oxygen

Johnson Oxygen and electrical system working at this time?

Powers Yes, everything was fine.

Johnson You weren't inbuffeted at this altitude were you?

Powers No, it was smooth.

Jim C. Let's see. This marks the demarkation of the weather here. The overcast up in this area and then you presumably broke on through.

Powers Well, there was a clear place in here also. Just southeast of the Aral Sea. But, it became undercast again here over the target that I was supposed to hit there. This looks like a pretty accurate plan. I mean, let's see, the broken line is the course

Jim C. This broken line is your course and the other one is your track.

Powers Yes. Yes, this is pretty good except for up here. I know I was right, of course, here. I could

Jim C. These are the reported altitudes that they had.

Powers In the southern part of the route, apparently, I had a stronger westerly wind and right at course and got a good position on a radio station. I don't remember which city it was but it was one of these little cities in here. Very good...about six miles to the ~~west~~ west of this city is where I was supposed to be so I was pretty well on the course in this area but I drifted to the right up here and it cleared up. This river south of - what do you call it - Turiton?

Jim C. ~~Turton, I am~~, ~~Turton~~, yes.

Powers This river, apparently, was in flood and there was a lot of streams, according to my map, going in but they were small. But they all looked about the size of the Mississippi on this particular day.

Jim C. Lowland flooding.

Powers Yes. That's what it appeared to me and it was very hard to find myself and I wandered around trying to get on course again in here a little. Came up here and approaching

this place I could see this river under the clouds. But as I got closer it was completely overcast here. There's a... I saw an airfield here. On a larger map I could show you where it was.

Jim C. Sure, I believe we'll have some larger maps tomorrow.

Powers Came on north here. I still... I made it.. a course correction to try to take care of the wind but I still drifted to the right of course and somewhere in this area here my auto-pilot

Jim C. Pooped out on you.

Powers Well, it, at first it nosed out but I was watching everything close - it started very slowly and I grabbed it, overrode it, disconnected it, hooked it up again... about ten ~~xxxxxx~~ minutes later the same thing happened and let it rest a while and did it one more time I think and after about three or four minutes the same thing happened so I discarded it somewhere in this area.

Jim C. Probably where this course becomes a little erratic in here. I suspect it might have

Powers Well, now

Jim C. Of course, you broke... was that a fairly good line squall of demarkation right in here?

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Powers No, it wasn't. There was a thin overcast that I could see through straight down somewhere in this area. But then I don't remember exactly the position but it broke off completely.

Jim C. Yes, the weather map showed it as a category one beyond a certain point in here.

Powers Beautiful weather along in here.

Jim C. Yes.

Powers Got back on.. I had Chelyabinsk - I don't know how to pronounce it - on the radio. Came in real good. Saw the city and corrected back on course. There were important flight lines of targets in here and I got excellent, would have had excellent coverage on the mountains. There was... this map I don't believe is quite accurate.

Jim C. No.

Powers It was about a 90° turn to the right here, flight line. And then, a little more than a 90° turn to the left.

Jim C. Yes.

Powers I made this 90° turn to the right and I think it was about a four minute leg, not very long, flight line and that was good. Made the turn back to a heading of, northwesterly heading,

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lining up on a long flight line just over the southwestern outskirts of Sverdlovsk. I had rolled out on course, had everything lined up, and was taking my readings and times that I passed this checkpoint, and that's why I don't think anything happened to the engine because I was looking at the instruments at the time it happened.

Jim C. You didn't ~~over~~^{attempt} tamper with anything at that point?

Powers No, I was dropping back. I was... I had been dropping back for quite a while here to maintain 70,000 feet so I was under the maximum. Everything was operating perfectly except the auto-pilot.

Jim C. Did you have plenty of oxygen?

Powers I had plenty of oxygen, fuel curve was good.

Jim C. You were on your curves, as far ~~as~~ as you can recall - at this point?

Powers Well, I can't remember exactly, I know I wasn't below either one of the curves. I might have been a little above.

Jim C. But, you at this point in here then debated this question of whether it might not be a wise idea to come home.

Powers Yes, I thought about it there because of the auto-pilot. I

knew that it was going to be a long trip but it was a long trip back anyway I looked.

Interr You were about halfway, weren't you?

Powers Just about, because I had been told to cut off here, anyway, to come up as far as

Jim C. You had your various cut off points.

Powers And it was already planned in and if necessary I could have cut off and made it even shorter, so, say this...extending this flight line here straight over to Bodo I could have saved...well, it was much closer here.

Jim C. I see.

Powers So I decided to go on. Besides that, I wanted to get some pictures anyway.

Jim C. Sure

Powers I can only estimate at the time after I rolled out - the - lined up on this flight line and I'd say between one and two minutes. I don't know exactly - that making these readings. and I either heard or felt some sort of an explosion. But it wasn't anything violent. Just seemed like a little boost, I had a sensation of, I think a little acceleration is what it

seemed like to me.

JimC. Pushed little. You mean - is it anything like the shake, rattle, and roll you get on take-offs?

Powers Oh, no, no, nothing-

Jim C. Nothing at all of that nature.

Powers Nothing... just.. like someone had just pushed.

Jim C. Was your seat belt tight at that point, by the way?

Powers I always keep it pretty tight and I had never loosened it after take-off so it was tight as it was then. Got to a - heard or felt that - I really don't know how I knew that something.. but I knew that something was wrong.

Jim C. Had you just prior to that point had you - you say you'd had your head in the cockpit, of course, looking at the instruments. Had you had any ground observations other than the general one that the weather was getting better? Had you been looking below you?

Powers Oh, yes. I had been looking below and looking around quite a bit.

Jim C. Had you seen at that point any of these sites that are later identified as surface-to-air missile sites?

Powers I didn't see anything or I couldn't recognize anything as such but

they showed me some photographs they said they got from the negatives there and it showed some of those but I saw none.

I saw no contrails, no vapor trails, no smoke, no nothing.

Jim C. Were you making con at any point in your trip?

Powers Only before penetration here. The contrails were a little higher than predicted but they quit, I think 65 or 66,000 feet and I think I leveled at full power with full fuel and I think somewhere about 68,000, I don't remember exactly.

Penetrated below 70 and climbed up to 70... it didn't take long. I don't remember exactly where it and the rest of it was on altitude and I was at 70 when this happened. After sensing this explosion, I looked up from the instruments and all I could see is just a - everything was orange. I can't remember whether it was just a flash but I only remember seeing it for a short time. I looked up and everywhere I looked and I don't remember whether I looked all around or not, just I know I looked out the front. Just the whole sky was orange.

Jim C. Did you associate any odors with that at all? Was there any strange--?

Of course, he wouldn't be on oxygen.

Powers Well, 100%.

Johnson That's right, you were on 100%.

Interr So you wouldn't...that.

Jim C. You might have gotten odors later down, but

Johnson But it was in front of you that it was orange.

Powers No, I saw...well, see I couldn't see behind me, it was just..
They whole sky - all around as well as I know was

Johnson All around?

Jim C. It was an orange flame or anything of that sort?

Powers No, it was just a color. It didn't look like anything
~~but~~ burning or...but everything was just colored orange.

The right ~~xe~~ wing went down or started to

Jim C. First, you got a pitch up, though, you said I think--

Powers No.

Jim C. Or was that earlier when you had your auto-pilot trouble?

Powers That was the auto-pilot trouble. The right wing..it started
just going to turn to the right. Very slight - corrected
back and the wing came ;up fine but as the wing came up
just about the time it got level the nose started ~~xe~~ to drop
and I made a good pull back on the stick and there was no

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connection between them. It was loose and the nose just kept going right down. Now all I can do is

Johnson It wasn't sudden? It was gradual?

Powers Well, it's hard to tell how fast this happened.

Johnson These things take a lifetime

Powers I remember that - well, time seemed to stand still there for quite a while.

Interr It didn't just flip right on over?

Powers Well, it started down very gradually, just as if...normally flying when your auto-pilot is doing something like that.. or you are on the stick and it

Johnson Did it feel you had cut the control cables or something?

Powers Just like it was normally, the nose.. normally going down and all you've got is a little bit of correction. That's the way it started but as I applied the correction there was no ~~x~~ resistance to the

Jim C. In other words, it was just as though the cables were gone.

Powers They were gone, at that time. They had to be cause

Jim C. All you got was the ~~yoke~~ ^{Yoke} in your lap.

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Powers A very loose stick...I pulled it all the way back.

Johnson Did you try to trim it out?

Powers No, I didn't have time because it started going down...got a hold of this ting - pulled it back and nothing happened and I came on back and by that time it was--. It - some very violent maneuver, I don't know exactly what happened but in my opinion it was like this. Nose got down, the wings were broadside to the wind, and I think they must have folded.

Jim C. Did you notice either one of them fold?

Powers I didn't notice any of them.

Jim C. Did you hear anything associated with noises?

Powers Didn't hear any noise at all I don't think but the nose went down, I assume that the wings folded because it - very violent maneuver there and ended up like this - with the cockpit here and me facing this way - nose high and spinning, I think counter-clockwise looking from the top. And it kept doing that and didn't get any worse than that after this happened but the worst maneuvers that this thing made was before it got into the spin and I couldn't tell you what happened there.

Everything was flying around the cockpit. The electrical system was still on because the lights were burning and I remember somewhere along in here I saw the RPM going down but I don't know where or when it was but the spin was very violent - throwing me way forward and I couldn't even, using both hands and both feet, force myself to the back of the seat. But I had no sensation of a red-out or a black-out. The G forces seemed to be forward and up. I wasn't sitting on the seat, just hanging in the air but against the belt.

Johnson And by this time the wings had come off.

Powers Well, they couldn't possibly have spun like that with the wings on.

Johnson No. One thing that I was very - have always been mystified about - I've not seen anything of a horizontal tail in these pictures.

Powers Oh, the tail section was in good condition, there.

Johnson Why, that's to the vertical tail but the horizontal tail? The horizontal tails had been broken off right outward of the fin - right upward of the tension box but I don't recall seeing the horizontal tails.

Powers Well

Johnson Do you recall that?

Powers It seems like I saw

Jim C. I don't either. Now wait a minute. Here's the...there's the section right there which, of course, has got this but there's no indication of the

Johnson that's the horizontal.

Powers Let's see now. I never did see it from this angle. I was on this side here.

Johnson But, if you lost half, the same thing would have happened.

Jim C. Yeah.

Johnson If you lost half of the horizontal and I've not been able to find that piece of tail with the pictures.

Powers That looks like in worse shape than I remember.

Johnson The vertical was actually pretty good from all these other pictures.

Johnson Have you got another view of this, Jim?

Jim C. Let's see if I do.

Powers I don't remember that

Jim C. Yes.

Powers But I thought the horizontal was on it when they took me

out to look at this but I can't say for sure. I just

Jim C. I'm not sure we do, Kelly. These are just a few selected ones.

Johnson It's been a while since I've looked back over them all ~~xxx~~
but I know one of the things that I was concerned about was
some of the ~~mission~~ part of the horizontal - because this
would be - you could have had either the control cable shot
out or nothing to pull on.

Jim C. That's the only one of the rear. We only

Johnson I know it is.

Jim C. approximate

Powers Well, now that...no...you can't see that

Jim C. Yes, that's nothing - that's only

Powers I notice they had the drawing of the U-2 here. One of them
was taken from Aviation Week or some magazine, with the
pogo-stick . The.. I thought ~~xx~~ the tail was...the whole
tail section was in good shape, very good shape and as well
as I can remember it looked better than that. But, it's in the
same position in the building, apparently as that.

Johnson We have some dandy photos of the thing we can show you.

Jim C. Kelly spent many a night pouring over these things with the engineers to attempt to extrapolate some conclusions.

Powers And that worried me quite a bit - these - you know, where the drag chute is supposed to be and where the

Jim C. Yes.

Powers The

Jim C. Granger was ?

Powers Granger was.

Jim C. Yes.

Powers It didn't look very damaged at all.

Johnson Had you switched on the granger in course ?

Powers Yes, it was on.

Jim C. And was the tail light operating .. in that by the way ?

Powers Yes, it was working. I had it in the instructive

Jim C. Yes, it was right on your map, wasn't it - as to where you turned off ?

Powers Yes, and everything was turned on where it was

Interr What does the map say ?

Interr This was something I wanted to know

Powers I didn't notice very much damage around here, either as if it had been ripped or

Jim C. A nice clean separation.

Powers But I don't remember seeing this side of the

Jim C. Course, they could always have taken that off, couldn't they, Kelly?

Johnson Yes.

Jim C. I mean, since it might have been hard to get it in the building. They could have just removed that portion of it.

Johnson We looked at those wings - at these attachments here, and they were not badly damaged, but there was a...the horizontal was not evident.

Powers Well, there was a very little, if anything, left of the cockpit section.

Jim C. That's right. It burned out, didn't it?

Powers Well, I don't know how much fire it had but there was definitely some fire there because the - a few pieces of the maps were burned, there was radio ^{fac} back chart that had been scorched and a few other...maybe let-down...I don't remember what all was in there. There was a lot of stuff in there that I had never seen before, in fact, there was one radio channel - channelization

card from Edwards, probably fell down under the seat or something, I don't know.

Jim C. I noticed they had one on all the route frequencies as well as your frequencies at Aadna, and so forth, which were supposed to be the placard right ahead of you, ~~is~~ you know.

Powers Well, they...we had it on the sun visor, that one. And then they had this one from Edwards. Of course, I knew nothing about that one.

Jim C. It's amazing what you can find under the seat of an automobile or under the seat of an airplane.

Powers And they had some radio navigation charts of Europe. Italy, France, and some of those places that I had never seen before, I don't know where they came from.

Jim C. Frank, prior to this flash that you recall, you had - had you felt or seen any other concussive thing like a black burst or any such thing off in the distance?

Powers No, now I was ~~is~~ watching very closely for a... scanning all the way around for contrails and so forth because earlier I had seen an airplane parallel to my course in an opposite direction below me.

Jim C. Was this down by TT?

Powers Yes, south of there where it was clear and just a few minutes later, I assume this same airplane, turned around and came back or another one about the same distance off course - and I estimate 20 miles to the right of myself - paralleling the course and passing me, going northwest a little bit and I kept looking for those things and never saw another contrail or anything. I had no evidence of anyone shooting at me or anyone. I thought maybe they had lost me on the radar or something because there were no contrails. I thought that there ~~would~~ ~~would~~ would be plenty of them the farther I got in but didn't see a single one and I don't know what kind of a trail a rocket would leave but I assume that there is some smoke involved and that you could see it but I saw nothing like that. But, of course, here on - I made this turn - I couldn't fly manually - I couldn't be scanning the sky on this turn, and it was more than 90° turn so it took a couple of minutes, I guess, I don't know exactly how long. And, in rolling out, I was only interested in lining up on course and not in looking around.

Jim C. Yes.

Powers So, I can't...there's probably a period of maybe, at the most, at the most, three minutes, anyway, that I probably hadn't looked behind or too much to each side but only on the course and making this turn. I got, I was lined up perfectly on that - and then - I can hardly describe this sensation - I don't know.. it seemed like I heard it but yet I don't know whether

Jim C. Ever been in an earthquake, Frank?

Powers Yes.

Jim C. Would it be analogous, in any way, to the kind of shaking you get there?

Powers No, there was no...that was it - there was no trembling or shaking. It was just - it seemed like a boost in that area.

Jim C. Like in a forward direction.

Johnson Lighting an after-burner on a high C fighter.

Powers But very mild, actually.

Johnson Here's -

Powers Not much.

Johnson The situation that you're in as far as where the lift in weight is. We have a very high camber to the wing, particularly when it's spared, it's got ¹⁰⁷⁰ ~~lots~~ of camber to it.

Powers Yes.

Johnson The weight here and in the lift here - you carrying a considerable downtail of

Powers Yes, trend

Johnson Your carrying five or six degrees above the elevator

Powers I think more than that - depending on the fuel load.

Johnson Right to the limb of the auto-pilot . If you lose that load this thing immediately tends to go on over on its back.

Powers Nose.

Johnson No doubt. Real bad. And if you lose half of this you couldn't hold it with the other.

Powers The same thing would happen.

Johnson You'd just go right on over and finally this thing breaks - inverted - and breaks off about six inches just this ~~is~~ side of the fuselage.

Powers Well, this was closer in than the fuselage, I'd say.

Johnson ... well, some were like it just before. We've had three cases of failures like this. Now, one of the boys from Del Rio had an accident over at the launching in Mississippi wherein we don't know what happened, but he got out of control at altitude - the wing failed again - down bending, in other words, just... well it sounded very much like what you've just described.

Jim C. In fact, he was having auto-pilot difficulties, too, wasn't he?

Powers Well, see my altitude was

Johnson Whether it was or it wasn't, we can't make out but he was flying at night - some way the thing got away.

Powers My auto-pilot was completely off, so there was no auto-pilot trouble.

Johnson So, you were trimmed so that the auto-pilot

Powers I was trimmed - everything was good.

Johnson So you had to lose something back there that's giving you downtail

Powers That's what I thought; what I assumed or I wouldn't have got that. Now, maybe if one of these had broken off

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wouldn't it give some sort of a twist to the thing?

Johnson Could. But no~~t~~much.

Jim C. Colonel Geary, greetings. You know

Col. Geary Hi, Frank.

Jim C. These gentlemen.

Col. G. Missed you other night, young man. Oh, Mr. Johnson, nice to see you.

Interr ... get in here this

Col. G. This ain't so very nice. It's going to be a working on these troubles.

Jim C. Oh, you've got no problem there. You can just walk on the water, it will be all right.

Col. G. Oh, yes, I think I met you before.

Johnson See if you are on half of this force, you can hardly hold the amount of camber you got in the wing.

Powers Well, see, maybe that would explain this slight turn to the right.

Johnson Could. I'm going to go back over and look at these pictures more carefully again. You turned to the right?

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Powers It was definitely - the plane went

Johnson And there's no left stabilizer on that.

Jim C. That's right.

Powers but it - very easy correction there.

Johnson It isn't a very powerful surface in terms of roll.

Jim C. As long as you had your wings you could make that kind of correction, couldn't you?

Johnson You could.

Powers I can't remember exactly when the nose started going down but it seemed to me as - definitely after the wing correction - I mean the wing started coming back up but maybe before it got level, I'm not sure, but somewhere in this time and it went down very gradually.

Johnson The wing went down. But, now, how fast did it start to pitch?

Powers No, not the wing but the nose started down very gradually, just as if it was normal flying.

Johnson Were you - you were flying manually and of course you had as much trim in as you could get.

Powers Yes, I had. I don't remember what it was on the indicator.

Johnson So, therefore, if you did break the cables it would tend to - it would tend to fly level if the whole tail was there but if it lost half - it would have to pitch.

Powers I had more than five or six degrees of trim, I know. I - there was indication

Johnson It takes about all there is.

Powers It takes a lot.

Jim C. Kelly, you, in looking at the photographs of the wings, did you draw any conclusions there about the breaking point? Was this the normal point where it would have broken under these conditions?

Johnson Yes.

Jim C. Close in or far out or - ?

Johnson It'll break anywhere from right at the side of the fuselage to eight feet. If - It's very uniform there.

Powers It seems like I can remember some left on the fuselage there but I don't remember how much, but it wasn't

Johnson Well, I'm - I meant the center of the fuselage but it's about five feet out from center of the fuselage which puts it out about a couple of feet.

Powers Oh, from the center of the fuselage. Well, that would be

Johnson That's where it went

Powers As far as I can remember, that would be about it.

Johnson But, this is why it could be gradual.

Powers The nose - just as if it's flying along and maybe a little out of trim and just - very gradually started going down.

Johnson Did you hear any sharp noises in the airplane? Any bangs or something ~~xxxx~~ like that?

Powers I heard no snaps, bangs, impact or anything else.

Jim C. Of course, you wouldn't hear much with your helmet on.

Powers Well, I had this on, the engine running, and radio compasses turned in on a radio station, so

Johnson It would be awfully hard. You'd more have to feel it than anything.

anything.

Powers But, I felt no shock in the control *column*. Everything seemed perfectly normal.

Jim C. You say you noticed your RPM beginning to drift down after this orange *flash*.

Powers I noticed it but I don't remember at what point.

Jim C. Up to this point you had no, really, erratic instrument readings *at this time?*

Powers No, everything was fine. Good. The EGT was back below max level because to ~~make~~ *maintain* 70,000 feet I had to keep reducing the power.... RPM was what it was supposed to be for certain temperature that - - made all these readings all along at each point and there was no indication of anything wrong with the airplane.

Johnson Did the engine get thrown out of the airplane?

Powers I have no idea. There was a lot of weight behind me when I was in *that* spin. Had to be.

Johnson Somewhere along the line we've had cases of the engine throwing out in a spin because the forces are so hard.

Powers But... the.. whatever it was spinning seemed to be spinning

from a center point here like this and I... in thinking about it think the engine might have still been there because there was something heavy there - seemed like to me. And, it was really going around.

Jim C. After you'd gotten out, Frank, did you see any of the pieces falling?

Powers I saw one piece, but, I don't know what it could have been.

Jim C. I mean - you saw no major

Powers It was a flat piece and it was falling like a leaf or light flat piece of wood - how it twists and turns as it comes down and if it, — depending on its distance from me would be the size and I couldn't tell. It looked pretty small but it looked a long way away, too.

Jim C. Yes.

Powers And, that was after the chute opened. It came down, passed me, *went out in a swirl*. But I saw, as well as I can remember, no other piece of the plane about but after getting on the ground I'm almost positive I saw a parachute way up and I think the people who picked me up there thought the same

thing because they were asking me if there
Johnson Was there a tail chute there ?
Powers There was no tail chute in there.
Jim C. No, we had some other
Johnson,
Powers I mean, there was no other parachute in there.
Johnson Well, what do you mean, you saw another parachute ?
Powers Well, that's something I don't know.
Jim C. This is fairly well substantiated by collateral
Johnson Is this the one that we thought they shot ?
Jim C. This is one that looks as though they've ... one of their
own in the process, you see. And this has been repeating
itself in various ways since the
Johnson But did you see another chute ?
Powers Well, it was so high I couldn't tell but the - I didn't even
notice it at first but these people punched me on the shoulder
and pointed to me and asked me if there were two people.
That's what I interpreted. Then I said, "no," and they
pointed up - I looked up and - it was high but I'm sure

it was a parachute.

Jim C. Well, that fits the stories that we've had, Frank, that in the course of this somebody got the business and was apparently killed in the accident, according to the story.

Powers I think this was mentioned by someone else.

Jim C. They gave him a posthumous order, another medal, or something

Powers They also gave some missile captain a promotion or an order, I think I heard about it.

Jim C. There also was a lot of discussion about the number of these missiles that were discharged and, of course, as I remember the reports varied all the way from one through 24.

Powers Well, they were bragging there that on the very first shot this happened.

Jim C. Well, that would, of course, fit the pattern of - you know - it's like the old story of the little tailor, you know, seven

with one blow. When he -- killing flies and everybody thought he was killing giants. ~~xxx~~ You were in this spin or sorts - going down - had you at that point any - were you conscious?

Powers Oh, yes. As far as I know there was no loss of consciousness at all.

Johnson How did you get out, Frank?

Powers Well, at first I was going to use the

Johnson Did it all come around, come apart around you? Or did you

Powers No, no, no, the cockpit was intact. I was going to use the ejection seat. I immediately - after this thing got into that spin - after this violent maneuver of which I don't remember what happened and it settled down into this spin - I reached up to get the destructor switches and stopped and I ~~said~~ I'd better see if I can get out of here first so I started trying to get back into the seat. Couldn't. And I could think of no other way to get out of that airplane except the ejection seat ~~at~~ at that time. Didn't enter my mind that I could open the canopy and maybe climb out. And I kept trying

to push back with one foot, ~~but~~ one side back and try to tighten the seat belt ~~and~~ it was impossible to get back to the back of the seat and I don't know how far forward I was but it was too far. I don't know how much clearance there is, *but there isn't much.*

Johnson There isn't much. There isn't much - you've got to store everything to get it out of the way to eject.

Powers In fact, I think some boys' legs were too long to use it-
thereabouts. Jake, or some of those people.

Jim C. Yeah.

Powers I heard them mention that they didn't know if they would ever use it or not.

Johnson *would have* They ~~hit~~ because their legs will stream out... I mean there's so much acceleration at the start of it that their *kickin* legs get snapped *and they can't* stow the wheel when the thing comes forward and they go on up. They might hit their toes on the board but

Powers That's better than

Johnson Better than *not* getting ~~out~~

Powers But, I can think of nothing - no way to get out but that *and* that was the only thing I was thinking about and I kept trying to get back and - glancing at the altimeter *and* knowing I was getting lower and I went through a lot of squirming there trying to get back into the seat.

Johnson In the meantime, your seat.. your suit had inflated? Had it not?

Powers Yes, and I had also pulled the emergency oxygen button.

Johnson So, you were pretty stiff, anyways, weren't you?

Powers I was pretty stiff. It ^{had} inflated but I didn't even know when it had inflated but I knew

Johnson This would make it harder, yet, to push around.

Powers After it had inflated I knew it. Don't know whether it was gradual or very fast or what but I remember - I think when ^{all that} I was trying to do ~~a little~~ squirming I knew it was inflated then. The last altitude I can remember seeing on the altimeter was around 34,000 feet and I made no progress whatsoever in getting back in the seat so that I could get out and so remembering an incident that [redacted] told me about

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just stopping and thinking when he was having trouble getting out of his airplane - I thought of that and so I stopped and said I've got to do something and then just like a bright light decided - well - open the canopy and get out that way so I reached up, got the handles, pulled them both back - the right one came loose first - it opened up - just flew open very violently, -- pulled the other one on back, ^{↑↑} probably, I didn't have it

~~Johnson~~ ~~He didn't know.~~



~~Powers~~ and it flew off to the left. Got my ~~J~~ didn't disconnect my oxygen - I forgot the oxygen was... I had forgotten about that but got my seat belt, opened it and ended up about hanging out of the cockpit/this far so ... against my legs ~~what was happening was that~~ here and I think the oxygen hose was ~~on the~~ end. Well, then I was trying to get back in so that I could get the destructor switches again and I couldn't reach back in there and I couldn't force myself to get back in

Johnson Still spinning all the while

Powers

Johnson Inverted

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Powers and it was trying to throw me out. Well, I was looking at the sky all the time, probably, not looking but leaning over this top of the canopy here, . and . I don't know how long this took but I knew I was getting much closer to the ground than where I had seen the altimeter last which was at 34,000 feet. And when I had opened the canopy my face-plate had fogged up and I couldn't see anything there.

Johnson How did you finally get loose? Did you get thrown out?

Powers Well, I tried two or three times to get to those destruction switches - I didn't know how high I was above the ground so I just gave a big kick and I don't know what gave but something gave and I just floated. Felt like I was floating and almost immediately, I'd say much less than a minute, the chute opened.

Jim C. Was this automatic, in other words?

Powers Well,

Jim C. You didn't, you didn't pull the chute?

Powers I didn't... I didn't do it. You see, I opened the seat belt and maybe that automatic cord hung onto the belt when it

pulled me up - it pulled. That's the only thing I can think and I remember the rip cord was in the chute, I believe, when they showed it to me but I don't remember. I can't be sure of that .. but I know I didn't get the rip cord and it surprised me when this thing opened... and

Jim C. Pleasantly, I hope.

Powers Well, at first, I didn't know what happened because... I knew it shouldn't.....it shouldn't

Johnson It was so calm after all that excitement.

Powers It shouldn't open because I hadn't pulled anything and I hadn't thought that maybe that had snapped out. But it opened and

Johnson Well, it must have opened around 15,000 feet.

Powers Well, that's what I was thinking. I know it was high. I'm sure I was above 10,000 feet up, but I don't know.

Johnson It was set at 15.

Jim C. ~~Inaudible~~ It was set

Powers It was set at 15 and so it would have opened though automatically at anywhere ~~when~~ 15,

Johnson That's right. So, you fell some distance to get to 15.

Powers Well, as almost as soon as I got out of the thing,

Johnson why there was some period

Powers It was about thirty seconds

Johnson Well, that's still quite an altitude

Powers It was, I'm sure, less than a minute and also as I was ~~when it~~ ^{it} threw me up over the canopy ~~and~~ knocked the rear view mirror off and that floated forward.

Jim C. Oh, yeah?

Powers The chute opened and I realized that I had to be 15,000 feet or lower so I took off my faceplate again and I was above 10,000 - well I was excited anyway - breathing pretty fast but the air felt pretty thin and it was a long way to the ground and it took a long time to get down there.

Jim C. You didn't attempt to steer your chute or anything, did you in the course of that

Powers Yes. I tried to hit . . . a wooded area but the winds were ^{the} back force. Seems like I would go ~~to~~ east a while and then come back to the west a while. I couldn't tell what was

happening but I tried to get to this woods and I guess, maybe - I don't know whether I helped the chute very much but it was ... oh ... maybe two or three hundred yards to the edge of this woods, from where I hit.

Jim C. Had you seen from the air, people on the ground running towards you or anything

Powers Well, when I got down fairly low, there was a ... I didn't know at the time that people were coming toward me but I could see a car coming down the road towards this little village that I landed just outside of. Good luck, apparently.

Jim C. How far did you land from the airplane?

Powers I don't know where the airplane landed. They showed me a map and said this is where it was but I didn't know where I had been. .

Jim C. I see.

Powers And they showed us where the pieces were picked up. There was a wing here and a wing there .. an engine here and I don't know how many

Johnson The engine was separate from the airplane.

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Powers It was at that time

Johnson Yet, it comes out in that spin, finally.

Powers It was at that time, I'm pretty sure.

Interr. Could you figure how much separation there was between the pieces roughly, Frank?

Jim C. From looking at the map.

Powers It was over a several mile area. I don't know the scale of the map you gave but I'd say the two furthest pieces were .. well, it would just be a guess because I can't remember what this map was but they were scattered.

Johnson Well, pretty well scattered.

Interr. scattered

Powers They weren't in a clump but around

Johnson Did they sail a long way? When those wings break off they're awfully light.

Jim C. When they showed you the equipment at Gorki Park, Frank, did you notice any doctoring of any of the pieces of the airplane? In other words, where it looked as though it had been taken apart and incorrectly assembled?

Powers Well, most of the equipment was very highly labelled

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Interr/s Several people whispering.

Powers I noticed the destructor . . . they had a hole cut in it or something and there was no charge in it. Some of the radio sets, and so forth, were so banged up that I don't believe they could have taken them apart and got them back in.

Jim C. I think, Kelly, you saw something about the ejection seat that you thought was a little fishy, didn't you?

Johnson Oh, we know it's fishy because they took it apart and misassembled it.

Powers I didn't know this, then.

Johnson Well, we went over everything we could from those pictures and this is very evident that they'd been interested in the seat.

Jim C. Yes.

Powers They told me that during the investigation that it was rigged up so that if I pulled the ejection seat it would have blown up immediately. They were trying to *Kill*

Johnson This is absolutely not true.

Powers Well, I know that . . . I didn't believe it for a minute.

Jim C. I think we gave you a little ribbing on that as I remember,
Kelly,

Johnson Quite a little, as a matter of fact.

Interr. I've been ribbed for many a

Powers I knew what they were after there. They were trying to
get me angry..with the

Jim C. Interrogators.

Powers No. To be angry with you people but later on they denied
that they'd ever said that to me because their experts
turned in . . so . . a study of this and they didn't know how
it was rigged up to explode because, apparently, they
didn't find the timer on the destruction. In fact, that
cockpit seemed to be pretty well destroyed.

Jim C. Oh, physically intact, you mean, the shell.

Powers Well, they didn't have that much of the shell there, it
seemed like to me, there was the canopy itself - the
front part of the cockpit and I don't remember

Interr This was pretty flattened by *the impact*

Powers very much of the shell at all

Johnson The equipment bay?

Powers The equipment bay? I don't remember seeing any of that, either.

Jim C. That's the thing we noticed was not present in any of the Q bay stuff.

Powers Well, they had a camera there.

Jim C. This we know

Powers It had a big lens,

Jim C. Oh, yes. It had a big lens, yeah, but we never saw the full amount of the camera.

Powers and, they had something, well, see I don't know too much how that camera worked but they had these two pieces of positives placed on this

Johnson Display

Powers Well, during the display they had this part of the camera, I'm sure where the film goes through

Interr Film transport to platinum.

Powers Right. And, they had the positive prints placed on that.

Jim C. Did they ever indicate to you that the camera was destroyed in any way in the course of these discussions with

you?

Powers No, only when they showed me there and I could see... they had this ring too that this thing swings on. I saw that. But, they didn't tell me anything about what was destroyed or what was not destroyed.

Jim C. And, they didn't say, we got so many thousand feet

Powers Oh, yeah. They told me they had plenty of that. In fact, they had... they said a tremendous amount but I don't know how much.

Johnson Did they show you any, Frank?

Powers They showed me some prints and it had rocket launching sites on it.

Interr There was no way you could tell from any of your experience whether these actually were prints out of your camera or not.

Powers No, because I don't know whether I could see those rocket launching sites from the air or not but the ones they showed me definitely had it on there; and I couldn't be sure that they came from my camera or they did it themselves. I

have no way of knowing that; but they told me they had a lot of film and I saw the track of film. The first place they took me they started bringing in pieces of equipment. Someone would bring in a little piece of metal and they had . . . about this . . . not much of the tracker but there was a lot of film there so it . . . I'm sure they get something out of that and they laid it over there and I saw it. I immediately . . . when they started questioning, admitted that we always carried a camera that shows where the course was, and so forth. But, I told them that I never knew what kind of equipment was in there. I didn't even know that there was cameras in there and that's where I made one mistake because my check list had cameras written on it.

Jim C. Uh, HUH! Did they remind you of this error?
Powers of it
No, they didn't remind me/but they gave me this.

Interr Did they ever remind you of it?

Powers -check list and I saw it.

Jim C. Well.

Interr They never mentioned it to you.

Powers They never mentioned it. They didn't say you're lying.

Jim C. Do you think that they accepted your attempt here to pass yourself off as just a truck driver?

Powers Oh, yes.

Jim C. There was a feeling among some of us that they may have accepted you as pretty much just a guy who went along and drove the front end he didn't know what the hell the

Powers That's what I was trying to kid them - that I knew nothing about what was going on back there and I convinced them that I knew nothing about the equipment. Although, I didn't convince them that I didn't know that there were cameras on board because since it was written right there that there was but I didn't remember that that was on my check list.

Jim C. I see.

Powers And, I didn't even know that they had a check list.

Jim C. You mean the "camera on", the "camera off"

Powers And it says

Jim C. Mode one, mode two and

Powers Well, it says the procedure for turning a camera on and during flight not having to turn it off and

Jim C. I see.

Powers All of this and it had, I think, A Camera, B Camera.

That was bad.

Jim C. Yes.

Powers But I didn't remember that those things were on one of these check lists so they knew I was lying there but I did convince them that I had never seen the equipment - that when the things were loaded no one was around. That all I had to do was go-when it said on this map - turn a switch on.. I turned a switch on - and that's where they got this little trick of saying, well - in turning one of these little switches on couldn't you have dropped a bomb.. or something. And, I told them this airplane couldn't carry a bomb and they knew that, I'm sure, from just studying the design. But, they used that in the trial to .. would it be possible for this plane to be carrying a bomb without your knowing it or something. I said, "Yes, it would be possible, but it can't. It's not designed for that; it can't drop any weight.

Johnson Jim, I must leave in a few minutes. I'd like to change

the course of conversation

Jim C. Alright, you go right ahead.

Johnson slowing up out here but, Frank, I wanted to tell you that - I don't know what your plans are, or what life will come but if you decide you want to come back to work we've got places where, I think, we can give you something to do. Perhaps, if you'd want to work down in our Marietta, Georgia plant, close to where your wife is, or some other place - if you'd give Jim a ring - I'd like to do what I can to get you back into this thing.

Powers That's very nice of you. I have no idea what the future's going to be like,

Interr I think that you're going to have to go to work, sometime.

Jim C. Yeah, you can't

Powers Yes. You can hardly walk to it.

Johnson I want to let you know that's the way we feel about it.

Powers Well, that's very nice. Thank you.

Johnson You can get a hold of Jim or Leo. They know how to get a hold of me and could work something out.

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Jim C. We can't get a hold of you in the right places, usually,
Kelly, that's

Interr You mean around here?

Interr He's pretty well had it.

Jim C. One question. Did they quiz you at all about the Company?
About Lockheed.

Powers No, they didn't.

Jim C. Any of the personalities involved in Lockheed?

Powers They didn't ask a word about it.

Jim C. Uh, huh. They had no doubt that it was Lockheed - I
would say.

Powers That was quite obvious, I think. I'm sure they

Interr Couldn't you tell them it was Convair?

Powers They had it in magazines.

Interr Couldn't you tell them it was a Convair or a Douglas?

Jim C. Looking for advertising, Kelly?

Interr Looking for advertising.

Powers They asked nothing about that that I can remember, anyway.

Jim C. Well, I know you're anxious, Kelly, to

Johnson This is fast yearning but Mr. Geary, here, gives me
that fishy eye

Several people speaking at once here. Inaudible.

Col G. you can have fifteen minutes if you want to, Kelly,
as long as the wind doesn't get out of hand

Johnson Well, you just keep the wind controlled and we'll go
right on

Jim C. What kind of a thing are you in, by the way?

Col. G. I've got an H-21.

Jim C. Oh,

Col. G. Do you want to go back with us?

Jim C. No thanks. What am I going to do with this car? Bury it?
Laughter.

Col. G. I don't know

Interr If you wish.

Col. G. policy, you ought to bury it

Interr Run that recorder down.

Jim C. No, I thought if it was, I mean, I've assumed you all were
going thata way and I was going thisa way because I thought

I might sort of stick around depending on Frank's plans

Col G. Of course, on the other hand, Kelly, there's no heck of a reason why we should become associated with UGA, anyway.

Powers I want to say one thing, here. I have no idea what this explosion could have been and I can't even be positive if it was an explosion but I can be almost 99% positive that there was something

Interr Are you sure of the light, Frank? Are you sure of the orange light?

Powers I'm sure that it was very orange.

Johnson About what time was this?

Powers I think I can figure that up on

Jim C. You mean the local time over there?

Interr Yeah, the local time.

Powers It was pretty early.

Jim I think it

Johnson I was wondering whether or not this could have been a white cloud with the sun shining on it to give it a

Powers No, it was perfectly clear.

Jim C. Well, here's a

Johnson Perfectly clear.

Powers at this point, straight ahead.

Johnson But, you said

Jim C. Yeah, we...they estimate a

Powers It was straight up and there were no clouds above me.

Johnson No, I mean... the thing that you saw.. was the explosion

Jim C. Course, this is happy thing here. This is all in Z time -
it says that subsequent to zero six two zero Z they thought
that you had bailed out.

Powers Zero six two Z

Jim C. Yeah, two zero Z. Ah, as I recall the time and

Interr It's four hours difference

Powers It was

Jim C. Yeah

Powers something like four hours or

Jim C. here are the times that we had - right here -
this time up here zero five three six Z

Interr Well, would that be

Interr This is seven or eight in the morning?

Jim C. Yes.

Powers It was this early in the morning?

Jim C. Yes.

Johnson Well, I was wondering if there had been an explosion with white smoke-then could the sun have colored it to give it the orange impression?

Powers Well, it didn't appear to be smoke it just seemed that the whole sky .. was .. smoke

Johnson Oh, you didn't see any

Powers I saw no smoke

Johnson smoke, as such. You just an orange

Powers I felt or heard this - looked up - and everything looked orange and all I could see was the sky

Jim C. Did that color persist - when you next got a look at the sky was it still orange?

Powers Well, I don't remember ever seeing the color again. They were asking me this, yesterday, I think.

Jim C. I see.

Powers And, I cannot remember - - I don't know when it went

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away or how long it lasted but I don't remember ever seeing it again. But this is a little wrong .. here I mean the supply .. well, it's very greatly wrong here but I was exactly on

Jim C. It stops being right about somewhere in here, we suspected.

Powers No, I think it stops being right along in here. Well, I was perfectly on course through these places. Where was that flight line that was very? - - - Right in here.

Jim C. The broken line is your flight line.

Powers There was a target. A very important target in here someplace - perfectly on course - made this turn - was on course here and was perfectly lined up on this and one or two minutes after - in here

Jim C. Right about in here

Powers Where is Sverdlovsk?

Jim C. Well

Powers Again

Interr Right in here

Jim C. Where is the town? This is the city right here.

Powers Right there?

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Jim C. Yes, this blue circle.

Powers Well, my flight line, as well as I can remember on the map went over the southern edge of the city here - right on the southern edge right there - and right in here was an airfield that wasn't on the map and I was pointed directly at that airfield directly over the edge of the city and had just made this turn here - so this is a little far. I landed just south of the city here, somewhere.

Jim C. Uh, huh. These are the things here that missile sites as well as you could see coming in

Powers Well, see .. they had me This photograph was a vertical and they said that I went right over - well they didn't say it but I could see ... they showed me two or three of them and you don't have any plots here

Jim C. Don't have any on the vertical, Frank

Powers That's what I've noticed here, now.

Jim C. Depending on this - the accuracy of this, of course, now

it could have been this

Powers: If this is my ~~xx~~ plotted flight plan this is definitely inaccurate here and this is definitely inaccurate. I don't know what scale this is but it's several miles isn't it?

Jim C.: Ah, yeah

Powers: ...all through this area here I couldn't have been, I'd say, more than a mile off course, at the time. And, right on here ...up through here

Jim C.: See, these computed speeds worked out pretty well, you know the speeds ~~were~~ between but then they began to get kind of fuzzy in here. Of course this is fairly normal...

Powers: Well, I don't know...

Jim C.: ...degradation of track...

Powers: I've heard about this, I have no idea what that could have been, but it definitely wasn't that U-2.

Jim C.: The only thing that was curious was that this portion of the course here is almost the obverse of your out-going leg, you see, and it looked as if you picked up a head...

Powers: ...to head it back out and also it showed a descent right?

Jim C.: Uh-huh. That's correct. You can see there were...here's the 62, 3...

Powers: What altitude did they have me?

Jim C.: Well, they had you 72, 2 and 73, 8 right in here. Well, of course this degree of inaccuracy. Here they had 68, 8 you see so that there's a...

Powers: They never said anything about whether they believed my story on the maximum altitude being 68,000 feet. Never said anything about it, but...as far as I know they only know 68,000 feet. I know that they only know it from me. But they, or I heard somewhere while I was there - I don't know whether it was after the trial or before the trial or what - that something was released in the paper that they were going to make some more flights at 75,000 feet//x. This was American papers, I think, or western papers. And I told them as far as I knew that was impossible.

Jim C.: Did you ever hear them speak about, in their inventory, having an aircraft which had an analogous capability to the U-2? In other words, was there ever any indication that they had started to build an aircraft specifically to combat the U-2?

Powers: No. The only thing they said was a rocket.

Jim C.: They never said anything about a manned airplane that they were developing that ~~xxxx~~ might have been capable of knocking you down or something?

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Powers: Never said a word about that and they concentrated ~~xx~~ strictly on the rocket business.

Interrog: You need a ~~gg~~ good watch.

Powers: It stops running occasionally.

Jim C.: Did the natives take it away from you?

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Jim C.: Frank, we'll be right back in a half second. I think you can probably stop the machine if you want, John.

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John: I just want to thank Frank and tell him that the end is here.

Powers: Well, I'm real sorry that your airplane...

Interrog: couldn't stay together...

Powers: . . . ended up like that, but as far as I know it wasn't faulty construction. I don't, I can almost - well, I can say this if I had to make any sort of a statement of what ~~xx~~ had happened, I would say that there was an external explosion and I would say that as near as . . . well my impression at the time was ~~that~~ ~~that~~ that it was behind and on my right. I don't know why I have that impression, but that's what I have.

Interrog: I am going to look again at all these pictures now in view of what you told me and see if I can find that half of stabilizer.

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Jim C.: If you can it might be useful...if you can let us know by phone.

Interrog: I will.

Jim C.: Whether, I mean, negative or affirmative on the search on ~~xx~~ that.

Powers: See, I assumed that the tail section came off all together. I couldn't think of the stabilizer...

Interrog: The stabilizer coming off alone upward...

Powers: I didn't even think of ~~that~~ and I knew that if the tail section came off it would be out like this.

Interrog: ...but if half it came off it would too.

Powers: But I kept thinking...

Interrog: Well, I'll look, ~~F~~rank..

Powers: Well, that's a lot.

UNINTELLIGIBLE

Interrog: The tape concluded at five minutes of three. This is Tape #3 on 14 February.

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